



Operation RIO Update

9 January 2004

One-thousand fuel and other supply trucks line up to await entry into Iraq at Habur, Turkey, during December 2003. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo)

An update for all SWD employees and Operation RIO volunteers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mission Update: A new post-combat high was set 6 Jan for crude oil production of 2.4 million barrels. The combination of fairly level production and import of refined products with demand remaining below expectations is leading to an improving picture for distribution of refined products in Iraq. Despite typical winter conditions in Iraq, production and imports of kerosene appear to be meeting demand.

The establishment of the new Gulf Region Division continues moving forward with the deployment this week of the Division Commander, MG Ron Johnson, and the Deputy Division Commander, COL(P) Joe Schroedel. The GRD is expected to be initially operationally capable by 25 Jan 04, and fully operationally capable before the transfer of authority between CJTF -7 and III Corps later this Spring.

Deployments/Redeployments: Deployments: **Sharon Turner**, SWD, 14 Dec 03; **Maria Or**, NWS, 28 Dec 03; **Mark Krenelka**, MVP, 28 Dec 03; **MAJ Trina Patterson**, SWL, 28 Dec 03; **CPT Sean Egan**, SWL, 4 Jan 04. Redeployments: **LTC Matthew Croke**, NAD, 1 Jan 04; **James Holder**, SWT, 3 Jan 04.



A view from down range: Larry Rogers

Article and photos by Alan Dooley
(Rogers was deployed 10 Aug - 13 Dec 2003)

"It all started September 11, 2001 for me. Along with a lot of Americans, I wondered what I could do," said Larry Rogers, Fort Worth District Engineering and Construction Chief. "The nation started to come together that day. Then came Afghanistan. Then Iraq. Maybe it was a calling. Whatever it was, I saw it as a critical mission for America and the Corps of Engineers and I needed to come." That is how Rogers responded to the inevitable question that everyone must answer: "Why did you volunteer to come to Iraq?"

Early in August 2003, Rogers found himself at Fort Bliss, Texas, 550 miles west of his home in Fort Worth. There he filled out

endless forms, listened to briefings, was examined and given injections by medical personnel and issued two duffel bags of military clothing, a Kevlar helmet, flak vest and protective mask.

"I left El Paso Friday afternoon. I arrived in Kuwait City after twenty-plus hours in the air and in airports, plus eight time zone changes. I never left the airport and hours later – Sunday – I was standing in the chow line in the dining hall in the former presidential palace in Baghdad, Iraq." At least his body was.

Rogers' assignment was to serve as DPM (Deputy for Programs and Project Management) for Task Force RIO (Restore Iraqi Oil.) The mission was crucial to the success of the American-led coalition's effort to rebuild Iraq. The nation had just emerged from 35 years of dictatorial rule that had taken it into two losing wars and seen a progressive but inexorable deterioration of its entire infrastructure. Oil provides more than 95 percent of Iraq's foreign exchange earnings and underpins the nation's entire economy.

In the intervening four months between Rogers' arrival in the 125-degree heat of Kuwait and his December departure from Baghdad, he has formed several lasting images of the experience in his mind.

"This nation possesses an incredible wealth of natural resources. Obviously, there's the oil. But there is also water, fertile soil and some of the most resilient, resourceful, hard-working people on Earth here. Iraq should be the crown jewel of the Middle East.

"We need the fortitude to stick this out though," Rogers said. "A lot of hard work lies ahead – a lot."



Rogers, who has journeyed to the southern and northern oil fields, as well as flown over a lot of the country in a helicopter, also commented on the geographic diversity of the area. "The contrast between areas with water and without is striking," he said. "There is a sharp dividing line between the green and the brown land as you fly along the rivers. It's wider some places and narrower in others. But it is stark."

But he pointed out that he was aghast at one aspect of Iraq. "Saddam Hussein lived extremely well – he and his cronies. And they did so at the extreme expense of the rest of the nation. Saddam could have been a great figure in history. He inherited – or stole – a nation with fabulous wealth, a remarkable history and heritage, the potential to feed the entire region. Then he squandered it on his own purposes – building an incredible series of palaces and monuments to shelter himself and his Baathist Party criminal colleagues and to massage his ego. This was nothing short of criminal."

Returning to his observations, Rogers spoke of the Iraq oil professionals. "These people are smart, educated and extraordinarily experienced," he said. He has worked almost daily with the most senior members of the Iraqi Ministry of Oil, and he observed, "Some of these people have been in this business 30 or 40 years. It is amazing how they have succeeded.

"Iraq's past misguided leaders have forced them to overlook maintenance and upgrades. While equipment deteriorated, Saddam insisted that they just keep delivering oil. When you visit their facilities it is just astounding how they have managed. From top to bottom – these people have just gotten it done – somehow. They are great," he stated.

"I can't give enough credit to the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) oil team either," Rogers said. The senior advisors to the Minister of Oil have been unequalled in what they brought to the table – Phil Carroll and Rob McKee – how do you convince people like them to come here? Both have been CEOs of global oil companies. Why do they come here to do this?

Phil Carroll was retired from running Shell Oil – he certainly didn't need to spend a summer in Iraq to prove a thing to anyone. And the people working immediately under Phil and Rob are of the same caliber.

"I'll tell you why. There is a fraternity – a brotherhood – in the oil world. These people may be fierce competitors in business, but they share the same considerations and concerns. This simply does not exist in any other industry worldwide. This is what these people do for their life's professions. I don't think another Ministry besides Oil has been blessed with this kind of outside contribution. It has made much of the difference for the rapid reemergence of the Iraqi oil industry," he concluded.

How will he advise those who ask him if they should volunteer to come to Iraq?

"They have to be interested for the right reasons. There's money of course, with the overtime and other benefits. And there are temporary promotions for some positions," Rogers noted. "But you have to decide to do this for the right reason – to make a difference.

"Then you have to look at your family or work situation. Some may want to come – for the right reasons – but they just can't. That doesn't make them bad people.

"And some may want to come, but their skills just can't be matched to one of the positions on the team. Again, they may be wonderful people. But this isn't a matter of just filling numbers. It is a matter of matching people and their specific skills and potentials to jobs."

Rogers shifted his thoughts to the RIO team and its performance in Iraq.

"Where do I start," he reflected? "This is a classic, text book example of the matrix organization we have heard so much about in the Corps. This is proof of the PMBP – that there is a 'Corps Way' of doing things.

"Take my own job," he said. "I'm a DPM without a program management organization outside my door. My PMs (project managers) are scattered from the northern to southern end of this country as big as California. I try to help them, to advise and guide them. But in the end they are accountable to each other – to everyone – to the mission, more than to me.

"The way things have gone here is also testimony to the Corps of Engineers and the people it has assembled. Each one comes as a new kid on the block. Quickly they grasp their jobs, sometimes carving out missions as a need arises. Over a short time old hands and at the end of four months, most leave. And the process continues. RIO just rolls on.

"The numbers of people who have volunteered and the resilient strength that continuously grows as the organization changes are further evidence that the Corps is indispensable for this kind of wartime and immediate postwar type of mission.

"Maybe it sounds hokey to some. But no other nation on Earth could do what we are doing in Iraq. And America couldn't do it without the Corps of Engineers.

"Nobody here is protecting turf either," Rogers added. "They are all just doing whatever needs to be done. Logistics people are serving as drivers. Everyone has moved furniture.

"We are doing good things for the people of Iraq. But let me tell you, we are doing good things for the Corps of Engineers too. The more people who are exposed to this mission and its methods, the better off the organization will be," Rogers said. "If PMBP didn't make sense or have any urgency on the CD disks, people can see it in action here. This is truly an experiential learning opportunity taken to a new plateau."

When asked about the future and returning home, Rogers said. "My wife, Gina, is meeting the plane in Dallas and joining me for the flight to El Paso. Of course, that will be wonderful. A few days later I will be home to our children (Kelsey – 8; Krista – 6 and Kaitlyn – 3).

"Of course, I am looking forward to home and the family. But there are a lot of other things too. Yes, I am eager to get some good Texas Barbecue and great Mexican food. But I want to go out in the yard and rake leaves with my kids. I want to drive without a flak jacket and helmet. I just want to wander through a Home Depot."

Rogers went on, "I haven't been in a store since August. I wrote a check the other day and had to stop to think about how to do it. It was my first since leaving home. I haven't paid a bill since I left.

"I have such a debt of gratitude to the people who stayed behind and let me come here and do this. I'm so proud of Gina. She has paid the bills, kept the yard and house and raised three kids by herself. The neighbors and people at work have been wonderful too," he added.

"And the dog will be relieved to see me too, I think. When I left we had the dog and two cats. Since August we have lost the cats. The poor dog must be wary about being next. Bad stuff's been happening to the pets since Dad left," he laughed.

Rogers' contribution to the Corps of Engineers and the Iraqi people has been of great value, and was recognized recently by award of the highly prestigious Army Civilian Meritorious Service Award.

"HOOAH!!"

*Robert Crear
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